

Help perk up the Pergola

By JOHN LIVINGSTON

The PDA is interested in your opinion about how to use the pergola at the north end of the Pike Place Market, changing it from its faded glory as a former trolley stop to an attractive portal welcoming folks to the Market.

The pergola is a roofed steel structure located at the junction of Pike Place, Western Avenue and Virginia Street, north of the day stalls. Pockets of rust mar the green steel poles that hold it up, and its roof is faded. A lone piece of railing is where benches used to be.

It began its life as a trolley stop for the Puget Sound Traction, Light & Power Company, according to a blueprint dated Oct. 23, 1914. The pergola lasted long after the trolley stopped running, and people continue to use it. The issue is how they will use it in the future.

"We want to know what the public wants to do with it," said Catherine Stanford, outgoing Director of Real Estate for the Pike Place Market Preservation and Development Authority.

Some possibilities include an information booth or a security station. But the PDA is still willing to listen to suggestions through July 15.

"It could be an information booth, similar to the information booth at First and Pike. Or we could have an interactive kiosk where people can get information online," Stanford said. "One challenge would be our map, because it has different layers. Another challenge might be the security of the equipment. We could set it up like the Heritage Center. It has roll-down doors."

Stanford said the booth could be staffed by the PDA during the day.

"At night, it could be someplace where security officers could stop by and file reports, or have coffee," she added. "The periodic presence of an officer would be helpful."

Security is a major concern – in the current incarnation of the pergola.

"Last year, the PDA removed seating benches for it. They were the source of issues with public safety," Stanford said. She added that neighbors are concerned about questionable activities at the pergola and neighboring Victor Steinbrueck Park – especially at night.

Putting it delicately, the pergola has become a gathering place for people with other agendas besides those of the Pike Place Market. Now, the benches are gone. But leaving an empty structure is not desirable, so the PDA is looking to improve the structure.

"We went to the Market Historical Commission for a change in use, and we have a use approval for the footprint under the existing pergola," she said.

In other words, the use can change, but the basic outline and dimensions of the structure must remain the same.

"It is the portal to the north end of the Pike Place Market," Stanford said. "There is also increasing foot traffic in the surrounding area with the build-out of Belltown and cruise ships coming in. We are really in the early stages of design, and we need the public's help"

The public might have other ideas about how to use the pergola, and they may have suggestions about how to design it. Filling in the pergola with walls and windows might not be the way to go.

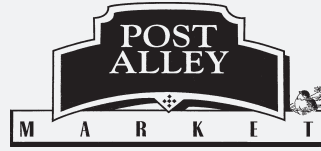
"Some neighbors have raised concerns about maintaining the transparency of the structure," Stanford said. "They want to be able to look through it, and still see Steinbrueck Park (and the waterfront). We could try to replicate a glassed-in pergola."

She said it would really be exciting to blend aesthetics in the pergola and still allow it to have a more practical side.

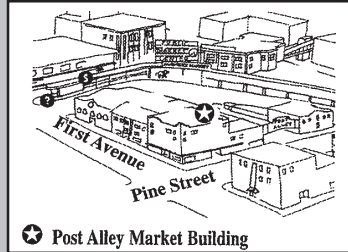
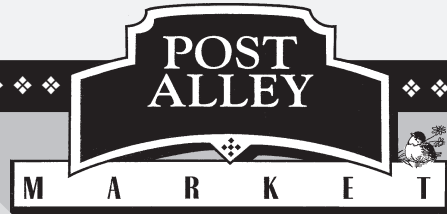
The PDA invited residents who live north of the Market to comment, as well as commercial tenants and Friends of Steinbrueck Park, to a neighborhood meeting late last month to share their comments and ideas.

"Hopefully, more creative minds will come up with some ideas," she said. "We will gather the information together, and make a determination on what to do. We are looking into the core issues, and we will maintain an ongoing dialogue. The PDA will make a decision in the fall, and take it to the Historical Commission."

Officials will take comments on the pergola until July 15, and Stanford said they will maintain an ongoing dialogue with the public. To make a comment, e-mail the PDA at info@pikeplacemarket.org or call (206) 682-7453.



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